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The US higher education system adopted the European pattern of separating the university from the city. This pattern has changed somewhat in the last few decades, when new universities or branches of older ones have appeared in the metropolis. But frequently these institutions are unconcerned with finding ways to contribute toward improving urban life. Their traditional concern, (going back 120 years), has been for rural and agricultural matters. They should now focus more attention on solving challenging urban problems such as pollution, transportation, housing, city planning and health. The task will require adoption of an interdisciplinary approach to the problems, special programs for each area of concern, and adequate, long-term funding from all available sources. A network of interdisciplinary teams attacking individual problems could lead to significant positive changes in present and future urban life. Further, the merging of separate disciplines would deepen understanding of and encourage involvement in the urban community by those qualified to tackle today's and tomorrow's complex problems. (WM)

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THE VITALITY OF A CITY: CHALLENGE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Challenge to Education: A New Approach

by Byron Johnson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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THE VITALITY OF A CITY: CHALLENGE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Challenge to Education: A New Approach

By: Byron Johnson
For delivery April 30, 1967

The topic with which I am charged is one I accepted as much because I wanted to know the answer as because I had any glimpse of where the answer might lie. After teaching for most of 20 years in a university within the downtown area of a major city, which is at once a state capital and a Federal center, I am profoundly concerned at the inadequacy with which the university has approached the city. I therefore welcome this conference and this opportunity to participate in it.

This conference has already dealt with the profound transformation through which society has been passing during these past few centuries. The world has been moving from a 90% rural toward an 85% urban and suburban society. While the total U.S. population has tripled during this century, the share of United States population in the standard metropolitan areas has also doubled (from just under one-third to just under two-thirds the total population), and by the end of the century 85% of 320 million people may live in U.S. cities, according to the figures of the Urban Land Institute. As the rate of change accelerates, the sense of crisis grows; and the record of the U.S. and of the other more developed countries no doubt provides some clue as to the crises which face the developing countries, for they will move even more rapidly from predominantly rural to predominantly urban

societies.

The situation facing us at home was partly summarized by J.K. Galbraith before the Joint Economic Committee hearings of February 24, 1965, when he said, "I am not quite sure what th. advantage is in having a few more dollars to spend if the air is too dirty to breathe, the water is too polluted to drink, the commuters are losing out on the struggle to get in and out of the cities, the streets are filthy, and the schools are so bad that the young, perhaps wisely, stay away, and hoodlums roll citizens for some of the dollars they saved in taxes."[1]

The university was at the outset a creature of the city. It was a corporation of scholars and students. These were more important than any special locus. Perhaps the separation between the university and the city dates back to the year 1121 when Abelard and other scholars were forced to flee from Paris. Abelard brought his students to an isolated monastic setting, Paraclete, but returned shortly thereafter to the suburbs of Paris; and the relationship between the city and the university was restored and continued not only in Paris but throughout most of the continent.

However the dons who went from Paris to England went right on through London and out to Oxford. They detached themselves by settling in a country town that <u>they</u> could dominate. And they are still at it. Oxford and Cambridge, isolated from the change and the challenge of the metropolis, became wealthy from the bene-

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[1] See also "The Starvation of the Cities", by J.K. Galbraith, his keynote address to Urban America, Inc., summarized in <u>The Progressive</u>, December, 1966.

volences of the powerful. Indeed they and their associates resisted the building of any true university in London until early in the 19th century, more than 700 years later.

This notion that knowledge of the city was somehow dangerous, that colleges were to be isolated from the city, dominated the attitude in the United States from the outset. Bostonians desiring a site for Harvard in the first decades of this nation chose Cambridge as "spotless from the contagion of the opinion... of godless Boston". In the same manner, Columbia University, or King's College, fled from the city of New York for the then remoteness of Morningside Heights on the north end of Manhattan Island. In the same way MIT fled from the major city, Johns Hopkins went out of the city, the state universities in many cases refused to consider the major city. Michigan would not consider Detroit but took Ann Arbor. Berkeley was chosen by California as being "in full view of the greater part of the city, and yet sufficiently removed to be beyond objectionable proximity".

And so it is, then, that the American university, following the example of Oxford and Cambridge, set more than 800 years ago, has only in the last few decades been turning to look afresh at the major cities of the nation to settle branches or new universities in them and to treat of their problems seriously. It has been suggested that most city officials and citizens, even today, barely know that the university is there. Indeed, even the universities in the city have been characterized as becoming "collections of scholarly commuters rather than communities of scholars".

And yet as the Journal of Higher Education noted in an editorial of November, 1963, no university grew out of a purely agrarian culture. The university is a product of the city. The rejection of the city by the university is like a Freudian rejection of the parent. The temptation to protect the university and withdraw from the culture has characterized too much of American higher education.

Indeed, even the concern of the universities in the city has frequently been only for the immediate environment. Whether one looks at the Illinois Institute of Technology on the south side of Chicago, or at the concern of Colombia and associated schools with Morningside Heights, or at the University of Chicago concern with the Hyde Park-Kenwood Urban Renewal program, or to the more recent joint action in Cleveland by Case and Western Reserve including the University Circle Development Foundation, one repeatedly sees universities perhaps more concerned with how the city serves them than with how they may fully serve the city.

The amendment to include section 112 of the Federal Housing Act has received much attention on the part of the universities because it permits urban universities to remove the slums next door and expand their campuses.

For the past 120 years the university has accepted a concern for rural and agricultural life. Can the university now face the city and its urban life? Has the university any concern, any role in the vitality of the city? It is obviously the conviction of this conference that the answer must be affirmative.[2]

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[2] The Truce in the War between the University and the City, by Kermit Parsons, "Journal of Higher Education", Jan. & Apr., 1963.

What is that role?

The role of the university must be seen first in terms of the university's own characteristics:

1. The university is future-oriented. It is not primarily concerned with the immediate, but with the lives that will be lived over their entire lifetime by those who are its students. It is concerned to explore knowledge, not for its immediate benefits, but for its long-run, its ultimate benefits.

2. The university is discipline-oriented, as Clarence Faust, President of the Fund for the Advancement of Education, put it at Santa Barbara, and I quote, "It is more and more clear that the faculty member is devoted not to his institution but to a career in his discipline. It is characteristic of disciplines, especially perhaps in the humanities and the social sciences, that they tend to deal with problems inherent in the development of the discipline rather than with real and urgent and current ones. The situation, then, in universities might be described as one in which the faculty member, far from being concerned about the development of a curriculum or the development of a core or the development of coherence within the institution, is concerned about how he may take the next step up the ladder of progress in his discipline."[3]

Indeed, the Municipal Manpower Commission commented in 1962 that to be identified as a scholar in the field of urban affairs was, until quite recently, equivalent to having an epitaph placed

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[3] From an article, The University: What's Wrong With It?; "Center Diary: 14", September-October, 1966; P. 6.

on an otherwise promising academic career.[4]

3. It is a universe-city. It sees itself as a part of all mankind, not necessarily as a part of the city in which it lives or the city next door.

4. It sees itself as providing security, prestige, and status so that its faculty are free. It is these and not political or economic power that are its coin. Its strength is in the power of the ideas it generates and the students it trains. It demands freedom that it may perform its own essential tasks, which include giving society not what it wants, but what it needs, as Abraham Flexner suggested back in 1930.[5]

5. It has a history which warns it. It warns it of the dangers of making bureaucrats out of its staff; it has seen staff members operating bureaucracies have their productive powers drained away by the trivia and the necessary involvements of the bureaucratic routines. Its history warns it of the risks of becoming a company town; it seeks to preserve its role as a universe-city. Its history warns it of the risks of involving itself with the town into what classicly have been town-gown controversies. Its history cautions it against becoming a captive of the immediate community or the problems of the immediate moment.

But the university is more than this. The university is also:

1. A reservoir of intellectual resources. It is a secret

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4. "Governmental Manpower for Tomorrow's Cities," Municipal Manpower Commission, New York, 1962.
5. Universities--American, English, German, by Abraham Flexner, New York, 1930; Pp. 5-6.

alchemy which can transform knowledge into wisdom.

As Chancellor Klotsche phrases it,"Teaching and research are at the center of the university's mission; and in both respects its scholars must face facts and pursue them fearlessly. It is this impartiality and ability to meditate that enable a university to clarify the problems of the community."[6]

2. It must remain both cosmic and cosmopolitan. It is and must remain in a center of independent thought and criticism--"an autonomous thinking community", in the words of Robert Hutchins.

3. It is a transfer agent. It can transfer resources in from the outside. It imports into itself ideas, knowledge, and persons from around the world.

4. It spins off from the university persons with a high energy potential--individuals, both staff and students, who go out, not only into the immediate community, but into the whole world. As a result the university has a lesser committment to its immediate environment than if it were not involved in the transfer in and transfer out of individuals, ideas, knowledge.

Given these characteristics and the role of the university both as a transmitter of human knowledge and wisdom and a critic of the human condition, the university can and, I believe, should engage in the basic concerns, the basic problems of all mankind.

As H.U.D. Secretary Robert Weaver said last December, "The university must become more and more the crucible for new ideas in meeting the urban challenge. This implies a new order of research

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6 The Urban University by J. Martin Klotsche, Chancellor UW-M, Harper & Row, 1966; P. 31.

activity which must encompass many disciplines. As we have slowly come to realize, the immense problems of this new metropolitan age simply do not respond to simplistic and piecemeal solution. It follows that the research programs we need must be structured to consider the subtleties and complexities of the problem..... We need the kind of research facilities, and institutions, which can analyze our pressing urban problems broadly and in depth, and which can then come up with practical and meaningful solutions.[7]

1. WHAT CAN THE UNIVERSITY DO?

Against this background, then, what <u>can</u> the university do? Well, first it can ask the important, the tough, the persistent questions. It can move from being wholly discipline-oriented to include being problem-oriented. It can "think in other categories".

Being future-oriented, it can take and identify forseeable crises with which the community cannot now cope, and attack these (because it is a resource pool) with the existing knowledge, and seek to develop means of coping with such crises.

This can be done in bite-size tasks at the outset. Consider how the beaver builds his dam. He first fells a tree, one bite at a time. He then cuts it up and he moves one segment at a time into the position, gradually weaving the fabric which ultimately dams the river and creates the pond in which he can then build his house. Some of these bite-size problems will appear, perhaps, to be fairly substantial bites. But take, for example, these

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[7] "The Urban Opportunity: Roles for the University", released by the Department of Housing & Urban Development, Dec. 8, 1966.

problems in the physical world:

the whole question of transportation, urban and interurban;

problems of air and water pollution; and

land utilization and planning.

Similarly in the social realm, there are such problems arising out of the racial and economic ghettos as:

the problems of segregation vs integration,

the problems of integration of particular minorities.

One might well suggest that we apply cultural anthropology at home as well as abroad. There are areas where there is a great gap between present practice and the known potential. These include health, and especially mental health; housing; elementary and secondary education; social services including welfare, rehabilitation, the salvation of families, and the willingness to attack personal and social pathology. These, of course, will each call for not merely being discipline-oriented, but frequently for being inter-disciplinary in orientation.

This might be accomplished by an environmental focus, Dr. Lynton K. Caldwell has recently suggested. Environmental focus would answer the social exigencies. It would facilitate the growth of scientific knowledge. It would inform judgement in policy choices. It would monitor man's image of reality and strengthen the foundations for social consensus, he suggests. Also an environmental focus reaffirms the fundamental unity among the sciences and avoids over-specialization.[8]

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[8] The Human Environment, by L.K. Caldwell, "Journal of Higher Education", March, 1966; Pp. 149-155.

II. HOW WILL THE UNIVERSITY ACCOMPLISH THIS?

The university requires a strategy of action all the way down the line if it is to cross the disciplines and find ways to make human settlements more viable. Its strategy will include many steps including these:

1. It must modify its own status system. It must provide an internal promotion system that gives more weight to public service than it does to publication. Public life must be given, accepted, and honored--by salary as well as by rank--as an appropriate and a highly significant assignment. Because the faculty member is motivated by career advancement, it is important that the university recognize this not only down-the-line to the faculty member at the bottom, but up-the-line to the administrator and the Board of Regents at the top, and by the Legislature which pays the bills in the case of the public institutions.

2. It requires adequate funding for such a program. The grant system is barely beginning to serve this purpose. Much greater support must be sought now from all sources, and the grant system further redesigned to accomplish greater attention to the urban problems.

Fortunately a number of modest efforts have been forthcoming in recent years. The Ford Foundation suggestion of 1958, repeated by President Johnson in 1964 (using, unfortunately, the county agent analogy), helped to bring on Title 1 of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This makes it possible for universities to engage in educational programs especially designed for urban areas.

There is a new special research and educational aid in the field of urban transportation. There are continuing programs in such fields as child welfare and the poverty programs of the Office of Economic Opportunities and others. But these tend to be limited either in dimension or in amount. We need continuing committment to finance the larger problems of the entire urban area.

"Let us look /at/ the total allocation /for/ the year 1964: of the $1 billion, 300 million expedited at our institutes of higher education for R & D--53 percent went...to our life sciences--medical, biological and agricultural--those sciences directly related to saving life and nurturing health; 24 percent to the physical sciences--physics, chemistry, earth sciences, mathematics, and others;...18 percent to engineering; 6 percent to social sciences /hardly an overwhelming share!/; 3 percent to psychology; and 1 percent in other sciences." Of this, the Federal government provided 72%. The rate of such spending during the past decade has increased 16% a year.[9]

Hence it is the university that must see that the bills get paid and keep its men independent of the traps of the grant system. It must do this using a time span equal to the assigned task. It must recruit competent staff; it must give them ample opportunity for study; it must give them and the students and the community time for adequate involvement, action, and interaction. It must not be in a hurry to see demonstrable results. This is what I mean by adequate funding.

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[9] See remarks by the Honorable True Davis to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, Feb. 27, 1967. Released by U.S. Treasury Dept.

3. The university will do this by tackling one or more of these problems, but not only through a single discipline. For if the single disciplinary attack were to be successful, we should already long since have been saved, for we have been using this over the entire period.

By starting wherever an interest exists and wherever new opportunities present themselves, the university may make great progress. For example, the new concern for health services for the poor offers an opportunity for social workers and for teachers to be enlisted along with the medical profession and the administrators. Each of these will gain much from the other and may give much more. The team together may make some novel and significant contributions in the process and all concerned may scatter the seeds much more widely over time and space. The university will succeed by using identifiable resources within the university or that may be attracted to the university.

Those who design the programs must learn to think conceptually and systematically. They must be willing, in consultation with others who can help, to develop a total strategy. They must be prepared to publicize the strategy only when publicity would improve its chances for success.

5. The university will succeed by assuring that the key findings and ideas emerging from such centers, or such clusters of university attack, get through to the very key points of city life. This means that the transmission of insights and the proposals must be through to the places where they will make the difference. Put it another way: knowledge isn't really helpful until it

reaches the person who needs it. The universities have too frequently in the past been content if a faculty member published his findings in some obscure journal in the hopes that somehow, somewhere, this note-in-the-bottle on the sea of academic publication will somehow drift ashore before persons who, having picked the bottle up, will open and read the message, and be greatly helped by it. It may take a more complete follow-through than this for the energies expended to be justified and the ultimate results obtained.

6. The university will succeed by moving its total attack on urban problems persistently forward from a number of separate points, established independently, always moving toward the potentials of linkages among these centers.

Thus there will be a number of separate centers at the outset, each largely self-contained and concerned about a single problem, with only modest interaction among them. Yet health, welfare, education, and the religious institutions tend to gravitate together in certain realms. Housing, land planning, neighborhood development, and community organization tend to gravitate together. So also industry, industrial design, location of industry, and transportation questions tend to gravitate one to the other. And thus, by a series of attacks, the university may develop the competency to attack the larger structure, the total megalopolis, as well as each of its subsystems. And only by developing competence in work on the subsystems, can we successfully attack the totality of the metropolis.

7. The university will succeed by providing, by building in

a necessity for, continuing opportunities for cross-disciplinary interaction to achieve clarification, redefinition, and growing cooperation.

Given the structure of the university and the heavy bias toward the disciplinary orientation, it will take a strategy which works overtime to encourage this kind of effective inter-disciplinary, cross-dsiciplinary approaches to the larger problems with which we are here concerned.

The Medical School may be an ideal model with which to examine this problem. For it can only do its work in tackling certain medical problems as it brings together the separate disciplines of pharmacy, endocrinology, physiology and psychiatry, or as it relates these or other specialties to obstetrics or gynecology, to pediatrics or to geriatrics. The Medical School as it meets the public may see the needs of the city with more visceral approach and response. Using its own experience, it can help invigorate a cross-disciplinary approach throughout the university.

It is my belief that out of such a course of action will grow new patterns of university life, new relationships with the community, and new support for the program, new awareness of the unique contribution which the university can make.

Harvey Perloff said in 1957, "It would be a cause much to be applauded if...the universities were...taking the initiative and evolving programs that are broadly conceived (looking to the future and not the past or present needs) and that are exciting intellectually and as high in quality as they are in

ultimate practical value."[10] J. Martin Klotsche comments in 1966 only a few urban universities make any significant contribution to meeting even the manpower needs of the local community. We still need, he says, not only specialists, but gifted generalists with a positive attitude toward complexity. Fortunately we are beginning to get some view of what universities look like that accept the challenge of the city. For a joint center for urban studies was established in 1961 at MIT and at Harvard. Interdisciplinary efforts have been initiated also at the University of Pennsylvania, Washington University in St. Louis, Rutgers, Universities of Pittsburg and Chicago and Northwestern, at Princeton, at Wayne State, and, of course, here in California. The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, established a department of urban affairs in the Fall of 1963 with the emphasis primarily on training "a new kind of specialist in urban coordination and integration", in the words of Chancellor Klotsche.

The UW-M program primarily looks to a core program of seminars on the culture of cities; courses on the dynamics of metropolitan development, on the design of urban research, on urban social structures, and on the urban political process; capped by an interdisciplinary colloquium on the city; plus electives in one's specialty. In June of 1965, Henry Maier, the mayor of Milwaukee, called together representatives of some 14 cities, at the suggestion of Professor Robert Wood of MIT, for action to develop a network of cooperation between the city hall and the halls of ivy, and to serve as a network of urban observatories. This is, perhaps,

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[10] Education for Planning, by Harvey Perloff; Baltimore, 1957.

one more application of the Wisconsin Idea of bringing the research and teaching of the university to the service of the community. In any case, the ground is being broken by the city universities. Kirk Petshek has suggested that the university will become "innovator, commentator, analyst, catalytic agent, critic, and advisor."[11]

We see then a university that seeks to accept the challenge of the city finally beginning to emerge on the American scene. These universities will, of course, continue to maintain their separate disciplines, for the city is only one among many concerns of the university. But the university must indetify these most significant urban problems. It must assign persons to them or recruit persons who will accept such assignments.

Members of many disciplines are being encouraged in their research and teaching and their publication to recognize this kind of public service within the area of their competence as a primary responsibility. These members of the several disciplines will be working together on such problems and it should be noted that interdisciplinary knowledge is no substitute for competence in one's own discipline. Thus persons who attack urban problems, be it health or land planning or transportation, must, of course, do so in the highest tradition of competence in their own specialties as well as in the new tradition of competent interdisciplinary attack upon urban problems.

The university which accepts the challenge of the city will

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[11] A New Rule for the City University, by Kirk Petshek, "The Journal of the American Institute of Planners", November, 1964.

encourage its faculty not only to seek these opportunities, but will require them to seek the additional insights that other disciplines can throw upon these urban problems. For only as we sit down and wrestle together with a common problem, which is bigger than that of any single discipline, will we come to appreciate that departments of the university other than our own also have a major contribution to make to these same problems.

It is my expectation that as time goes on these various centers will come to grow closer and closer together. Though they may start from their special area of concern or special problem, it is my profound hope, that the departments and the faculties concerned will seek to form an all-university center for urban studies and for urban design.

The university, and only the university, can be so innovative, can take an over-all view of the urban scene, for it is only the university that comes to this problem able to identify itself with the whole of the urban scene and with a total concern for the city. The university has always had the tradition of concern for the well-being of society. That concern must now extend to the exploding metropolis, as Dr. Klotsche has suggested. I would say that as the university meets this challenge, it can help assure the vitality of the city. I would add the footnote that the city which seeks the cooperation of the university must do so in recognition of the special nature of the university. It will be a tragedy if the city seeks to prejudice the outcome of the university's work by describing too closely what it wants and thus failing to permit the university to give it what it needs.

The cooperation between the city and the university must be in a form which respects the freedom of the university.

But it is equally true and even more vital that the university accept the challenge, that the university see the city not simply as a political or an economic organization, but as a rapidly changing social structure that is rapidly changing the character of the lives of peoples everywhere. No one has complete foresight, including university faculty, and yet most problems can be tackled better by taking conscious thought, by using research methods. The university has a great deal to contribute. It has a great deal to learn. Many individuals have dreamed of what the city of the future might look like. Some have had nightmares of what the city of the future might look like. But the nightmares can only be avoided, and the dreams can only be realized, as we tackle these problems with courage and determination. The lives we save will be our own, and those of our children, and of our children's children.